



Listen

A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

O C T O B E R 2 0 1 4

V O L 8 : I S S U E 4

INTERSECTIONS

An unexpected outing on a supermoon night brought me home, back into my skin. I remembered something important: the necessity to float when I am sinking. I learned to swim about the time I began to walk. Floating on my back, buoyant, I'm a water baby, a lover of fluidity. It's a life value for me to live engaged, active, and simultaneously in flow or sync with my inner experiences and the outer world I inhabit. Yet, a deep disconnect had been growing in me, becoming a necessary chasm I was not entirely certain how to navigate. On a summer evening in Alaska, USA, wearing no life preserver or life vest, I stepped into a kayak. It had been years since I'd played or swum in lake water.

Sloppy paddling soon dripped my legs and bare feet wet, but like riding a bike, deep strokes, to the left, then the right, took form. Effortlessly, I was gliding. Yellow water lilies along the shore intrigued me, and I turned toward their rooted beauty. Laughter and voices from two young women accompanying me rippled across the water surface from their kayak, a gentle presence, coming alongside.

Intersections—complex and simple—captivate me this season. I notice the intersect that transpires in my body, heart, and mind through photography, words, between people, in politics and belief-systems, and particularly in the landscape of my current home in Alaska. I'm ever more aware of



Azure Kingfisher — *Alcedo azurea*

the power to risk the unknown, the yet-to-emerge, and the courage it takes to stop, just stop. Walk away, walk towards. Speak up, engage. Intersections call forth a willingness to integrate polarity, the known, the unexpected, and new terrain. This is what my life—what life itself—has been doing to me, bidden and unbidden. Perhaps this happens to you, too.

In conversation, I think we three were still on the lake pausing again to float and talk, the insight from Frederick Buechner bubbled up: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Every so often, Buechner's question grabs me, biting into my life. It's happening again, and I've been sinking, because it likely involves moving from my comfort zone—which if I admit it, has become uncomfortable. I must risk being vulnerable. Notice my *yes*, and *no*.

I'm saying *yes*, consciously or unconsciously, giving permission for intersecting forces to take hold and shape me. I've let go of fighting the sink, and in the same manner as paddling the kayak, remembering the value of floating. I cannot flow, if I've forgotten—or refuse—to breathe, to allow what is to be and to become. The lake outing, with two women home from college for several weeks, together with our probing conversation about life purpose, people, travel, and service, restored an essential element to me. Float. Flow. Risk simultaneous complexity and simplicity. Pause. Be in my skin. Wake up and listen to life, here and now. Notice deep gladness and the world's deep hunger that moves in me and in you, inviting advocacy and action.

Where are you experiencing life sink, life float, or flow? Who accompanies you as you notice your experience? Where is the invitation for advocacy and action emerging?

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- Field Guide: *Spiritual Inquiry*
- Poem: *Love Me Into Being*
- Poem: *In This Place*
- Book Review: *Meister Eckhart: A Mystic-Warrior for Our Times*
- Global Resources
- Ask Owl

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In This Place

Standing in this shimmering place,
resting after the long journey,
this pilgrim has found a new home.
Walking through
the transparent doorway
the air is thin and pure,
and the light,
crystalline,
as it brightly bounces off
the sun, the moon, and the stars.
Once this portal opens
the old ways drop and diminish
into the floating vast horizon.
Standing in the sacred,
the paradox of the journey
reveals its promise,
and the lofty mountain waterfall
with its soft and savage beauty
smoothes and polishes
all sharp obstacles along the path,
and they become lovely
glistening gifts of heaven
that cascade gently
into the longing of my open heart.

– Ann Morley Walters [Texas, USA]



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SPIRITUAL INQUIRY

When it is time to meet with a spiritual director, men and women often wonder what to talk about ... paying attention to what would be most meaningful to explore. During spiritual direction sessions, we weave life experiences, dreams, a broken heart, a healing heart, cares, concerns, interactions in family and the workplace, our vision for wholeness in our own lives and the world, feelings, prayers, and relationships with God and people we interact with in daily living. The intention in a spiritual guidance session is to probe and explore—sometimes gently, and at other times with passion and strong inquiry—the movement of God, or grace, or spirit, energy, or flow in our lives. The result is that a dynamic emerging experience might ensue, and bring us insights, healing, and wholeness. Ways to focus attention in a spiritual guidance session could include:

- Share about a powerful experience of connection with others, yourself, or in nature
- Reflect upon the journey of your prayer life or contemplative practice
- First notice, then speak about, the cares and concerns in the world which grab your heart and won't let go
- Delve into images of the Divine, God, or the Sacred, that emerge, morph, and shift in your life. Be curious about what is constant, and what changes through time
- Pay attention when something in the now is reminiscent of your past experiences and story. Ask

yourself, and be willing to wonder if there could be a new meaning or significance created

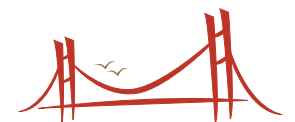
- Be honest with areas of your life that invite discernment, a decision, or action
- Be willing to risk difficult conversations about aspects of your life that you would prefer to keep hidden
- Notice and celebrate where love, joy, and commitment bring peace to you and others

When you meet with your spiritual guide, there is not a prescribed roadmap that defines your time together. Ask yourself, "What intrigues me to explore?" "Where am I invited to stretch and grow, or let go?" Then be willing to go the distance into the inner journey that ultimately takes an outer form with your embodied action in time and space.

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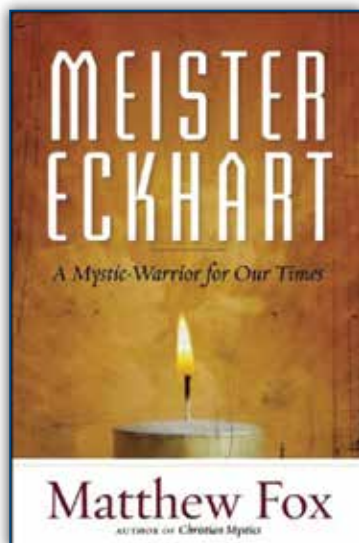
WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG

Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at **www.sdiworld.org**, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at **www.sdiworld.org**.



BOOK REVIEW



Meister Eckhart:
A Mystic-Warrior for Our Times
 by Matthew Fox
 Novato, California: New World
 Library, 2014
 336 pages, CDN\$22.50, £10.50,
 USD\$17.95

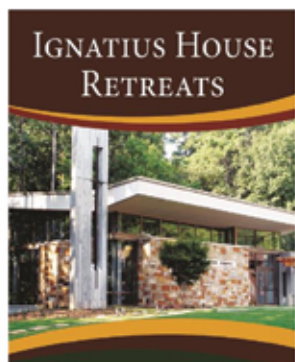
Meister Eckhart (1260-1329) was a popular teacher in his time. He focused on deep contemplation which resulted in action. In the extraordinary and insightful book, *Meister Eckhart: A Mystic-Warrior for Our Times*,

Matthew Fox intersects Meister Eckhart in written dialogue with twentieth-century thinkers and activists such as Rabbi Abraham Heschel, Black Elk, Thich Nhat Hahn, Carl Jung, Father Bede Griffiths, Thomas Berry, CP, Julian of Norwich, Marcus Borg, Dorothy Stang, and Khwajeh Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafez-e Shirazi, among others. Fox writes, "Along the way, Meister Eckhart is a very special guide—he challenges us all.

His leadership calls us to a new level of evolution and consciousness. He calls us to leave old wineskins behind" (xxiii).

Thirteen chapters teach and intrigue. In the conclusion, Fox asks, "Where might Eckhart take us?" and explains, "Eckhart is a mystic among mystics, a prophet among prophets, and a warrior among warriors. He speaks profoundly today to both heart and mind, to person and community, to Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Goddess worshipper, shaman, and atheist. He speaks to depth psychologists and healers of many stripes, saying a 'living life is a healing life.' He speaks to activists seeking justice for the environment and in economics, politics, and education. He speaks less in dogma than in images and aphorisms that entice and alert, in language meant to awaken a slumbering species. As the fifteenth-century Indian mystic Kabir puts it, 'Why not wake up this morning, you have slept for millions and millions of years'" (273).

Meister Eckhart: A Mystic-Warrior for Our Times inspires deep reflection, and has the potential to evoke excellent conversations and insight. Eckhart exclaims, "Compassion is where peace and justice kiss" (89). This new book by Fox could be likened to a sweet kiss for the reader and the world. ✍



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Love Me Into Being

O God, take me to the edge of reason,
where caution tugs and possibility pulls
where rules apply – or don't apply
and indecision creeps in.

Take me to the edge of reason,
where visions meet good sense;
where life suspends between earth and sky
and process lies in wait.

O God, take me to the edge of reason,
where insanity feels almost sane;
where practicality breeds or daring leads
and inner conflict finds a place.

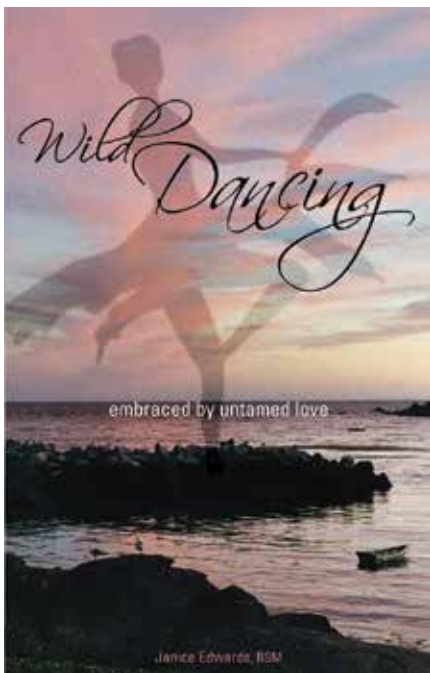
Take me to the edge of reason,
where familiar settles and unfamiliar stirs;
where mind controls or heart wanders
and tension occupies good space.

O God, take me to the edge of reason,
where dreams are lived – or not lived;
where hope inspires or doubt inquires
and choices beck and call.

Take me to the edge of reason,
where bodies rest or know unrest;
where waiting molds or moving aches
and peace dangles amid the chaos.

O God, take me to the edge of reason,
where transformation hints or teases,
then hold me back or shove me off
just love me into being.

– Susie Tierney [Iowa, USA]



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—Ellie Stratton, *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*

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—LAUREN BURDETTE, 2014 NEW CONTEMPLATIVE

MORE INFORMATION: WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG

ASK OWL

Question: To avoid conflict, I've heard the advice to dodge talking about religion and politics. I am curious: is politics a topic I can bring up with my spiritual director? Could my spiritual director help me discern political positions on issues or candidates, or is that an off-limit topic?

Hoot Hoot: Excellent question! Our civic responsibility could be described as discernment in action on behalf of wholeness in community. So, absolutely yes—a spiritual guide can listen and accompany our questions regarding political candidates, affiliations, positions and complexities with issues, ballot measures, and our advocacy and action. There is not an off-limit topic for you to address in




a spiritual direction session. The time with your spiritual companion is yours to lead. A movement of the spirit, God, flow, essence, or whatever you choose to name it, is central. The spiritual practice of meeting regularly with a spiritual director develops a clear mind, compassionate heart, and engaged, embodied action. Listening for God's guidance is the essence of spiritual

direction. Your politics, political views, and advocacy actions have an important place in this conversation and inquiry, and deserve time and attention to explore. A spiritual guide is a valuable resource for this arena in your life of civic responsibility. 🦉



—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiworld.org.

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“Tending the holy around the world and across traditions ...

Al servicio de lo sacro alrededor del mundo y a través de las tradiciones ...”

—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio



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